



The Bear Facts

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
OREGON CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARD

Summer 2023

*Making utilities
affordable,
accessible,
reliable, and
clean for people
in Oregon.*

Dear CUB Members,

The legislative session is coming to what is sure to be a disappointing end. Normally, we are sharing exciting news this time of year. Many of our priority bills, like building resilience and funding for rural broadband, would be nearing the finish line. But instead, we sit watching as the walkouts continue and the days keep creeping towards the end of the session.

Despite this legislative disappointment, we still have much to celebrate. **Oregon is one step closer to 100% clean electricity**, with utilities' plans recently released (pg. 2). Regulators have sided with CUB and **rejected much of NW Natural's unreasonable plan to meet climate regulation** (pg. 3). We also saw an **outpouring of community voices against PGE's proposed rate increase** (pg. 2).

And, there are many other opportunities for big wins this year. CUB is working to **hold CenturyLink accountable for dangerous issues with their landline service**. Customers have joined CUB in **pushing back against Avista's practice of charging customers to expand the gas system** (pg. 4).

There will always be setbacks. But with the support of members like you, CUB will carry on advocating for utility consumers and creating a brighter future for us all.



Regards,

Bob Jenks

Executive Director, Oregon CUB

CenturyLink Must Be Held Accountable

Regulators at the Public Utility Commission are investigating CenturyLink's landline phone service. The company has ongoing service quality and safety issues, including:

- Dropped calls and phone outages
- Not reliably responding to service requests
- Violating safety standards for telephone poles
- And more!



Now, CenturyLink is not only trying to avoid fixing the issues, but they are also asking regulators to raise customers' bills. **CenturyLink must be held accountable.**

CUB advocates are working hard to push regulators for a deeper investigation, and prevent CenturyLink from continuing their harmful business practices.

Share your story with regulators! Call (503) 378-6600 or email puc.consumer@puc.oregon.gov.

610 SW Broadway
Suite 400
Portland, OR
97205

(503)227-1984
oregoncub.org

Oregon Headed Toward 100% Clean Electricity



Oregon passed the 100% Clean Electricity Bill in 2021. Now, Pacific Power and Portland General Electric must run on 100% clean, emission-free electricity by 2040. As of May, both utilities submitted their first-ever Clean Energy Plans. These plans show how utilities will reach clean energy goals without burning fossil fuels.

CUB and other advocates weighed in as the utilities created these plans. Through this process, regulators have expanded traditional utility planning to include community focuses. Now, utilities must identify topics of importance for Oregonians. The plans set goals and track outcomes for utility actions and measure the impacts on communities.

Although these Clean Energy Plans are still in progress, CUB is hopeful that we are on the right track. We are continuing to advocate for realistic and cost-effective planning, while holding utilities' feet to the fire.

PGE Customers Speak Out Against Proposed Bill Increase

On May 5th, 2023, the Public Utility Commission held a public hearing on Portland General Electric's (PGE) proposed 14% bill increase.

Organizations and individuals across the state testified against the rate increase. Many customers testified against the rate increase stating record high living costs within PGE service areas.

"I live in a home built in 1914 and I already pay \$350 a month for my electricity bill, which is up \$100 from last year. I am already financially struggling, what PGE is doing is not sustainable for the average person."

- Lisa, Portland

CUB works to providing the information you need to speak out on utility issues that affect you!

Avista Seeks 8% Bill Increase in 2023



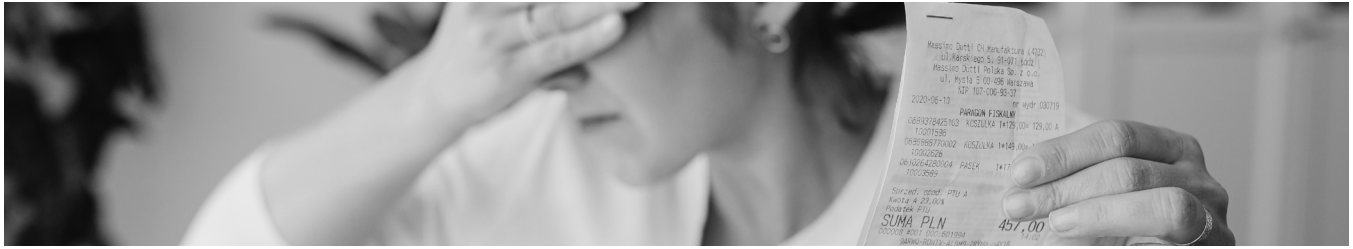
Avista is asking regulators to approve a new 8.1% bill increase for its residential Oregon gas customers. This would add an average of \$6.20 per month, with winter bills going up around \$13 a month.

CUB's priority is a safe and affordable gas system for Oregon households. Some of these costs, like replacing dangerous pipes, are likely reasonable. However, **we have major concerns with Avista's customer-funded subsidies to expand its system.**

These subsidies are unreasonably expensive, costing customers about \$6.9 million last year alone. They could also put customers at financial risk as the gas utility must cut emissions to meet climate regulations. Regulators decided to cut NW Natural's subsidy last year. **Now, we need them to do the same and significantly reduce or eliminate Avista's costly subsidy.**

NW Natural Prioritizing Profits, Not Customers

This year, CUB has been kept busy by NW Natural. Oregon's largest gas utility has been fighting to keep its shareholders happy by putting customers at risk. Our advocates have been digging into the facts, engaging with policymakers, and pushing for stronger protections for Oregonians.



Regulators Side with CUB, Reject Much of NW Natural's Climate Plan

The Climate Protection Plan requires the utility to reduce emissions by 90% by 2050. In late 2022, NW Natural filed its long-term resource plan with state utility regulators. This plan will have long-lasting impacts on meeting state climate goals. It will also have major impacts on future customer bills.

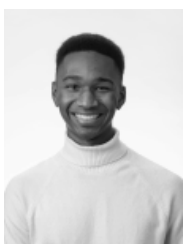
The Oregon Public Utility Commission has sided with CUB and climate groups, rejecting much of NW Natural's plan. **Regulators agreed that the gas utility did not consider options that would be in the best interest of customers.**

The plan heavily relied on fuel options that are high cost and not widely available. This is a big win for customers as the rejected plan would have created higher bills down the line.

What to Watch: NW Natural Spreads Misinformation to Policymakers

NW Natural and its allies succeeded in killing the Utility Consumer Protection Bill by falsely framing it as a de facto gas ban. In reality, this bill would have safeguarded utility customers in Oregon from financial risk during the clean energy transition. It also would have added protections by moving the responsibility to subsidize fossil fuel expansion away from customers.

Through lobbying and misinformation, the gas industry has shown that its priority is expanding the gas system, not protecting customers. **This is not the first time that NW Natural has spread misinformation.** We have seen similar tactics at the Eugene City Council, in front of Multnomah County Commissioners, and even in schools.



Sharif Morton
(he/him)

**New Office
Manager**

As CUB's Office Manager, Sharif engages in CUB's administrative needs and looks to bring CUB closer together through enhanced organizational management and relentless curiosity.

Outside work he spends his time reading, hiking, and exploring on his bike.

CUB Announcements

Annual CUB Members' Meeting

Do you have a burning question for CUB staff? Would you like to help CUB better understand their membership? Join the CUB community for our annual Members' Meeting!

On Tuesday August 8th at 6 pm, CUB members will be meeting over Zoom for a community feedback session and to review CUB's financial documents. **Sign up at oregoncub.org/events!**

Call for Board Members

Do you have experience in utility policy? Experience in nonprofit board management, fundraising, or HR? Expertise in social media or outreach? Are you committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Apply to join the CUB Board! Deadline to apply is August 30.
Email sharif@oregoncub.org for more information.



Oregon CUB

610 SW Broadway, Suite 400
Portland, OR 97205

Non-Profit Org.

U.S. Postage

PAID

Beat the Heat: Staying Cool in Oregon

Find Free A/C Units

Oregon Health Authority

Available statewide

For those receiving medical assistance (OHA, ODHS, or Medicare) and are at risk for heat-related illness. Contact your health provider for a referral!

Cooling Portland

Available for Portland residents

For qualifying low-income households. Priority for seniors, those at risk for heat-related illness, and those living alone. Contact 211 for a referral to a distributing organization

Know Your Rights

In 2022, the Oregon legislature passed Right to Cool (SB 1536), which CUB supported. This bill mandated tenants' access to cooling units in their residences. This means that, with a few exceptions, **landlords can no longer ban window units or portable A/C units for renters.**



Oregon CUB